

Introduction

We would probably all agree that writers, artists, actors and musicians are creative people. In reality, each of us has been provided with all we need to be creative. We are creative people daily. We create our home environments with selections of furnishings and decorations. We choose clothes and colors that fit our own personalities. We write letters that communicate personal and business information. We alter our routes and routines, creating new ways of doing things. We formulate new ideas and change our minds.

Creative thinking is much more than using our imaginations to invent lots of new ideas. Creative thinking is:

- a lifestyle
- a personality trait
- a way of looking at the world
- a way of interacting with others
- a way of living and growing.

Living creatively means:

- developing our talents
- tapping our unused potentials
- becoming all that we are capable of becoming through self-discovery and self-discipline

Anytime we are faced with a problem or dilemma with no learned or practiced solution, some creativity is required (Torrance, 1962;1988;1995)

Creativity is a vital ingredient in meeting the challenges of a continuous life cycle, a cycle in which growth and change are the norm from conception throughout life. A life filled with growth and change requires a conscious effort to think creatively. To develop creativeness, the mind needs to be exercised as well as filled with materials out of which ideas can be formed. The richest fuel for ideation is firsthand experience (Osborn, 1963).

Creativity is the ability to see a situation in many ways and to continue to question until satisfaction is reached (Goff, 1998).

Creative Abilities

There are 4 major creative abilities identified on the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (Goff & Torrance, 2001). They are:

- fluency
- flexibility
- originality
- elaboration

Fluency is the generation of multiple ideas, alternatives or solutions. There is considerable evidence that the more ideas we have, the more likely we are to find a useful solution or answer. There are many creative techniques for generating ideas, alternatives and solutions. One very

effective method is brainstorming. Alex Osborn introduced brainstorming as an element of the creative problem solving process. Brainstorming skills can be developed when practiced with content or when practiced for skill development. Brainstorming can be used anytime there is a gap in information, a problem or a question.

BRAINSTORMING RULES

Rule 1: “Don’t rain on my parade”. Every idea is valuable. Record every one.

Rule 2: “Take a walk on the wild side”. Create breakthrough ideas from stretching to crazy, off-the-wall possibilities.

Rule 3: “The more, the merrier”. Produce as many ideas as possible.

Rule 4: “Lean on me”. Combine new ideas to lead to more new ideas.

Rule 5: “Focus, focus, focus.” Do not allow discussion or questions during brainstorming. Ideation is the key.

Flexibility is the ability to process information or objects in different ways. It is the ability to abandon old ways of thinking and initiating different directions. Optical illusions require flexibility. They require looking from different perspectives in order to see different objects or images. Flexible thinking provides for shifts in thoughts, detours in thinking to include differing points of view, alternative plans, differing approaches and various perspectives of a situation.

Originality involves getting away from the obvious and commonplace or breaking away from habit bound thinking. Original ideas are new and different. An original thinker must be comfortable with being different and be able to withstand the ridicule and skepticism which will be directed toward his/her ideas. It takes courage to be creative. Originality is a creative strength which is a mental leap away from the obvious. Original ideas are often described as:

- surprising
- unusual
- remarkable
- wild
- weird

Elaboration is the ability to embellish ideas and details. Elaboration involves the development and implementation of a new product or program. Elaboration involves planning:

- what must be done
- who is to do each task
- when it is to be done
- how it is to be done
- how much time it will take
- how much it is going to cost

Elaboration involves making the plan, telling the story, filling in the gaps, tying up loose ends, orchestrating an event, coordinating a project, painting a picture, etc. It takes a great deal of elaboration to sell an idea and gain its acceptance.

Tips for Increasing Your Creativity

- 1) Look for the second right answer. Often the really creative idea is just around the corner.
(**Fluency**)
- 2) The answers you get depend on the questions you ask. Play with the wording and get different answers. (**Flexibility**)
- 3) Challenge the rules you use to govern your day-to-day activities. (**Originality**)
- 4) Cultivate your imagination. Set aside time every day to ask yourself "what if" questions.
(**Elaboration**)